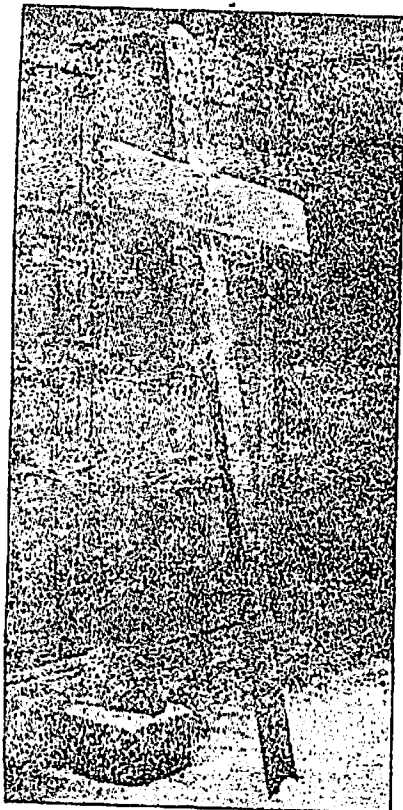

Arrest Made in Cross Burning



By KEITH L. MARTIN

Duxbury police have arrested a teenager in connection with a burned cross left at the entrance of Holy Family Church and more arrests may follow.

Police Chief Mark DeLuca announced Tuesday night that Gregory Cerne, 19, of Bayridge Lane, was arrested as a suspect in the incident, where an eight-foot cross was left and set on fire at the front of the church sometime between Sunday night and

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Duxbury police have arrested a teenager in connection with placing this eight-foot cross at Holy Family Church and setting it on fire.

Arrest Made in Cross Burning

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Monday morning.

DeLuca said that on Monday afternoon, a confidential informant came into the police station with a list of suspects believed to be involved with what officials are deeming a hate crime. After investigations conducted by detectives, he said, Cerne was questioned and confessed to bringing the cross to the church and setting it on fire.

Duxbury police arrested Cerne, who graduated from Duxbury High School in 2003, at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, and DeLuca confirmed that officers had confiscated a personal computer as evidence.

Cerne is facing charges of arson, destruction or threats to destroy a place of worship, and property damage for the purpose of intimidation based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability. He is scheduled to be arraigned this morning in Plymouth District Court.

"There are several other suspects we are talking to now," said DeLuca. "It does not appear that he was alone."



Gregory Cerne, 19, was arrested on Tuesday by Duxbury police and faces charges including arson and destruction or threats to destroy a place of worship.

Concerning a second unburned cross found at a home on Oakwood Road on Monday, DeLuca said that while he believes the incidents are connected, police don't have substantial evidence at this time to charge Cerne or anyone else. He added that Cerne knew the family where the second, smaller cross was placed, but would not comment on the teen's confession to police regarding his involvement in that incident.

Concerning the description of the incident as a hate crime,



Police Chief Mark DeLuca said that Cerne's arrest may be the first of more to come in connection with Monday's hate crime.

DeLuca again declined to go into details of Cerne's confession, but cited "evidence in [Cerne]'s statements to us" and the involvement of the church as factors in that determination.

Attempts to contact the Cerne family regarding the charges against their son were not successful by press time.

Monsignor William Glynn

regarding the discovery, which they were told about following the service.

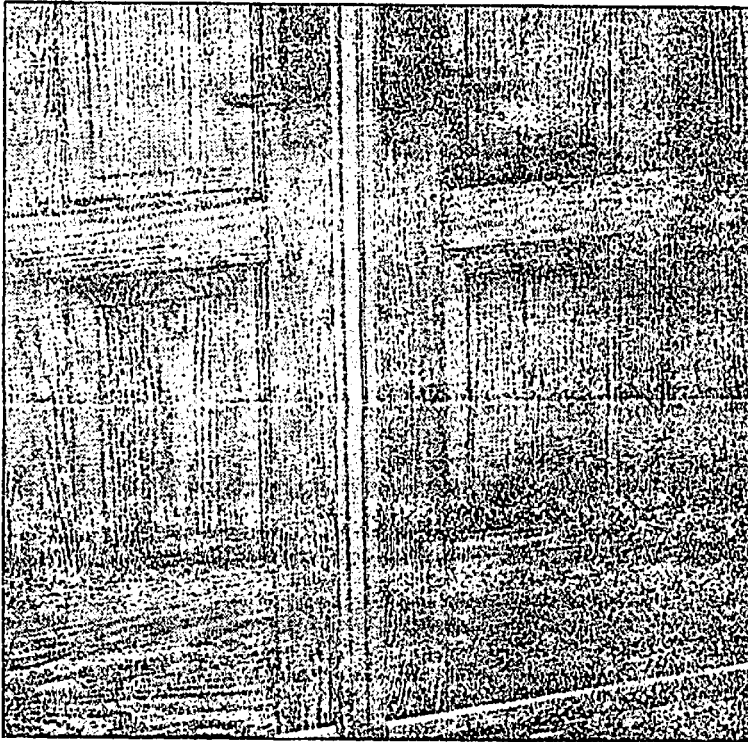
"I'm very concerned but Father Andrew [Johnson] asked us all to pray for forgiveness for whoever did this," said Lee Downey. "Why would they target our church?"

Another parishioner who wanted to remain anonymous just shook his head and called the incident "disgraceful."

Sarah McCormick of Peterson Road said she was not concerned about her safety at the church, but could not understand who could have done such a thing.

"I'm shocked and incredulous," she said. "I can't believe this could happen here or anywhere in this country for that matter. I'm just shocked."

said that he discovered the eight-foot wooden cross at around 6:30 on Monday morning and was the first to arrive at the church. He called to a few plow drivers who were working in the parking



In addition to burning part of the pillar it leaned on, the wooden cross charred the front door of Holy Family Church.

lot, who then called Duxbury police.

"There were no other footprints in the snow when I arrived," said Msgr. Glynn. "It wasn't burning when I found it but there was some kind of canister nearby, but I didn't touch anything."

Duxbury police and fire officials responded to the scene and also contacted the State Fire Marshal's Office, who removed the cross from the premises and conducted tests to determine the accelerant used to fuel the fire.

Msgr. Glynn said on Monday that neither he nor the church had received any hate mail or phone calls prior to the discovery of the cross, making the incident a mystery to him.

"I have no explanation for this," said Msgr. Glynn. "I'm glad that the fire went out by itself and this was not worse than it was. I don't know if this is some kind of warning or what this is."

Parishioners leaving the 9 a.m. Mass on Monday expressed a range of emotions

Ellen Erdwein Berall, chairwoman of the Duxbury No Place for Hate Committee, said on Monday that her group was horrified by the incident, but is glad that no further damage was done to Holy Family Church.

"I certainly think that if this was an act of desperation, the person responsible needs help and should seek it immediately," she said. "If this is an act of straight out hate, then we'll work on prevention. We'll do whatever we can for Holy Family Church."

Resident Harry Katz, who chairs the South Shore coalition of No Place for Hate communities, said that Duxbury is "a good community that believes in tolerance and does a lot of good toward this goal," and said that the coalition would also rally to the aid of the town and the church following Monday's incident.

"We'll pull in support from all our surrounding communities," he said. "If the church needs us in an active role, we'll do that."